



CITY OF MILWAUKIE

"Dogwood City of the West"

STATE of the CITY ADDRESS

2016 – Delivered by Mayor Mark Gamba

***Delivered at the Milwaukie Rotary Club on December 8, 2015, and
at the North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce State of the Cities Forum January 27, 2016.***

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for taking time out of your day to hear about our city and the extraordinary year we've had. I've only been your Mayor for 7 months and already it feels like years... it's been that intense.

After literally years of planning and construction, the Max Orange line opened on September 12th ushering in a new era for Milwaukie. One in which I think you will see this city blossom and be recognized as the gem we've all known it to be for years.

The light rail project brought with it a number of important additions to Milwaukie:

Both heavy freight lines now have silent crossings through the core of our city.

We have a beautiful bike and pedestrian bridge that crosses Kellogg Lake and will be the lynchpin in a connection between Island Station and Miramont Lodge with Downtown and the light rail station.

We completed the first stage of our South Downtown plaza in the construction of the Adams Street Connector. Both Adams Street and the Bridge were made possible by grants from our friends at the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Metro.

And I would say that Chris Haberman's cool new mural on the High School was spurred on by the eminent opening of the light rail station across the street.

But even if the Max had not come to town it would have been a banner year for Milwaukie:

We hosted the Traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall where thousands of people from around the region were able to come pay their respects to the fallen. American Legion Post 180 and North Clackamas School district were instrumental in that effort.

Riverfront Park Phase 2 was completed and the new boat launch and dock opened in the spring. And moving just slightly up the Willamette from there, hundreds of trees were planted around the Kellogg Water Treatment plant courtesy of the Kellogg Good Neighbor Committee, WES and Clackamas County.

We also began the planning process for what will become Milwaukie's first Woonerf on 19th Avenue which will connect Riverfront Park with Spring Park and its brand new trail system that was just completed a couple of weeks ago thanks to our partners at North Clackamas Parks and a hodgepodge of grants secured by Tonia Burns of NCPRD.

Speaking of parks we also completed the master planning on four neighborhood parks: Kronberg, Balfour, Bowman-Brae and Wichita

While all those fun and exciting projects were going on we continued to maintain and upgrade our infrastructure:

We rebuilt Railroad Avenue at a cost of \$1.4 million dollars and slurry sealed 5 other streets.

We replaced major sewer and storm sewer pipes to the tune of \$2.4 million dollars.

We also tackled some smaller storm water projects that dealt with flooding that had been occurring for decades. I received a particularly kind letter after one project in the Historic Neighborhood. A gentleman by the name of Jack had been contacting the city for 50 years about a flooding problem at his house. I thought 50 years was probably long enough to wait, so I worked with the City Manager to see if we could create a process to deal with these sorts of issues. Right after this meeting I'll be going out with the team that we created to look at another property with a long history of flooding during heavy rain events.

A great deal of what a city must be engaged in is planning. In the Public sector nothing big ever happens without a great deal of planning, work and public engagement.

The council recently approved the master plan for the Monroe Street Neighborhood Greenway. This is a project that has been in preparation for years and involved hundreds of hours of public process. We are now at the stage where we can start looking for grant money to build what will be Milwaukie's first Greenway.

Speaking of grant money, we will begin construction in just a few months on the separated bike and pedestrian path along 17th Avenue which will connect the Spring Water Corridor to the Trolley Trail, thereby closing our one mile gap in the system. The project which is now projected to cost \$4.2 million dollars is being funded by two MTIP grants.

The Planning Commission and the Council have been working on three large zoning and code change packages generally called Moving Forward Milwaukie:

The first one that passed was the Downtown package which simplifies our zoning and both tightens up and makes clear a path forward for future redevelopment in downtown. We've had dozens of developers interested in the downtown and we wanted to make sure that the development we get will be beneficial to, and desired by, the city.

The second one to pass was the Central Milwaukie package. Predominantly that deals with two large vacant lots just on the other side of Highway 224. It also encompasses the areas in between. This

package dramatically cleans up the zoning for that area, which previously made those two lots virtually undevelopable. Now there is a clear path forward for multifamily residential, light industrial, commercial and retail or a mix of any of the above. It also moves our Transportation System Plan forward creating possibility for better multi-modal connectivity through the area.

The third package is still under deliberation at the Council level having passed the Planning Commission. The main goal there is to create an opening for small, neighborhood sized retail within the neighborhoods, moving us closer to having 20 minute neighborhoods. 20 minute neighborhoods are ones that within a 20 minute walk from home folks can access the kinds of things they need and want on a daily basis – groceries, coffee shops, book stores etc.

A planning process we've just begun is to look at the possibility of using the tool of Urban Renewal to improve our city. There are many ways in which we could use this powerful tool. It is one that cities like Wilsonville, Happy Valley, Oregon City and Lake Oswego have used to great effect.

Over the next year we will be working with our partners in the school district, the county and fire department as well as the general public to see how we might improve Milwaukie with Urban Renewal.

We are also working on three Requests for Proposal for the three vacant lots that the city owns in downtown: The parking lot across from City Hall, the Cash Spot at the corner of McLoughlin Boulevard and Washington Street and the triangle site next to the light rail station. Our hope is to have projects that bring energy efficient buildings which have a good mix of retail, residential and possibly office at two of them. If we do partner with a developer to build on the lot across from City Hall, my intention is to complete the South Downtown plaza so that the Milwaukie Farmers Market (the 56th best in the country) continues without a hitch.

At the triangle site, we hope to entice an entrepreneur to develop a food cart pod. If you haven't visited any of the more recent ones, I would recommend Happy Valley's new pod out on Sunnyside Road as an example of what I hope to see built.

Lastly, in conjunction with Clackamas County, we have just received a \$250,000 grant from Metro to study our North Main Industrial area on both sides of McLoughlin Boulevard. The purpose of the study is to look at the changes the city needs to make, and the opportunities that exist, in order bring the kind of development into that area that would result in more living wage jobs per acre.

Beyond the formal planning processes, I've been deeply engaged on a number of issues facing the city, the region, the state and the country. Problems that are truly national and yet the effect is very local:

Working people, who are losing their homes because the jobs they have – often multiple jobs – don't pay well enough to cover the mortgage or the rent and after struggling for months or even years, they find themselves homeless. For me, this is the issue of equity, it is something not often considered by those who make the rules because they themselves are not experiencing that level of

difficulty and don't truly understand. At a local level we have started to explore how we can make our processes, rules and fees more equitable so that we don't continue to allow our neighbors to slide into abject poverty and homelessness.

As a region we need to get creative to solve the issue of work force housing, let alone the issue of homelessness. New ideas like Cottage Clusters, ADUs and Tiny Homes and old ideas like boarding houses and multiple families sharing the same home require a fresh look at our codes and zoning.

Another issue that we all face, that has gotten a lot more attention and argument, but not nearly enough concrete action, is that of climate change. I believe that it is hard to spur the level of action required because I don't think most people understand how climate change will ultimately play out if we continue with the status quo. Quite simply put, the increasing, drastic, variability of weather patterns will make it more and more difficult for farmers to produce food.

What baffles me is why some people fight so hard against the changes that are required in order to fix the problem. Creating our energy with sources that are renewable will only reduce air pollution, water pollution, noise and frankly expense. They will in the short term, also create more living wage jobs and eventually a more pleasant world to live in. Designing our cities to be much more efficient will ultimately make them much more livable and comfortable. Will it look different than the world we've all grown up in? Of course, but our world would not even have been imaginable to the people who lived a hundred years before us. Change is the only constant. We get to choose whether that change is good for our children and grandchildren or devastating. I choose good.

To that end, I will continue to work both here in the city, and at the regional level, to cause concrete change that will drastically reduce our carbon footprint and make our city and our region more livable. As a city we have begun that work by choosing to be one of the few Platinum level cities buying all of our electricity from wind power. And we are just beginning to piece together a solar energy program that will aid both residents as well as businesses in choosing to create their own carbon free energy on site.

I will partner with other cities, metro and the county to find actionable solutions to the housing crisis. I will work to bring many more living wage jobs to Milwaukie and fix our code so that we are not inadvertently hurting those living in, and nearly in, poverty.

I don't believe that it is the job of the Mayor to maintain the status quo, I believe it is my job to make this city a better place for everyone who lives in it now and in the future. That's what I intend to do.